

Step 2: How to Get Started

Once an organization decides they want a Worksite Wellness program, the first question is often “What kinds of things should we do?” Before you have that discussion, you should lay the groundwork and get more information. A summary of what to do would include the following items, all of which are very manageable if you take them one step at a time:

How worksites can get started

1. Gain commitment from stakeholders such as senior management, human resource managers, safety officers, staff members, etc. (Step Two)
2. Create a workgroup that involves cross-sectional representation of your organization to help with the development, implementation and assessment of your wellness program. (Step Two)
3. Assess the needs of your worksite. Complete a worksite environmental assessment and conduct an employee interest survey to collect information on the topics that would be of most interest to staff. (Step Three)
4. Look at the program strategies and resource needs. (Step Four)
5. Use the assessment and survey results to prioritize your program components and to set goals and objectives. (Step Five)
6. Develop an action plan with appropriate strategies to address specified goals. Include a timeline, a budget, and an evaluation plan. (Step Five)
7. Market and implement the plan. (Step Five)
8. Monitor progress and make necessary changes. (Step Six)
9. Evaluate the outcomes. (Step Six)
10. Continue to revise the plan to maintain a healthy environment for all employees.

Developing a Company Wellness Workgroup

Gain Support from Management

Support from all levels of management is a key to the success of your wellness program. To ensure the support of management, inform managers about the program early on and encourage them to participate. Communicate clearly and often the goals and benefits to the company and participants. Direct sufficient resources and staff time to developing and implementing your wellness program.

Assembling Your Workgroup

The Wellness Workgroup is responsible for promoting the worksite wellness program, planning activities, recruiting team leaders, and conducting the evaluation. The size of the committee will depend on the size of your company and the scope of the program or activities. The committee should include staff that represents various employee shifts and departments such as management, union representatives, human resources or administrative assistants. There is no minimum or maximum size, but the workgroup should be large enough to represent your workforce. If you already have a wellness or health promotion committee or other groups interested in taking on this role, involve them on the workgroup. Workgroup members can focus on recruitment, activities, events, rewards/incentives, and evaluation.

Designate a Coordinator

Management or the Wellness Workgroup should identify a Wellness Coordinator to manage the program. Although the Wellness Workgroup and others can share some of the responsibilities, having the right person coordinating efforts increases the likelihood that the program will be well managed and delivered. **The level of success for the wellness program is often linked to the coordinator's time and ability. It is essential that some or all of the coordinator's time be dedicated to the wellness program. If this isn't possible, then the company should consider contracting with an outside party to provide programming.** Local healthcare organizations and YMCAs often provide this service. Check with your local contacts to see if this is an option.

Workgroup Meetings

The Wellness Workgroup should meet on a regular basis, at a minimum on a quarterly basis. The workgroup may meet more often during peak times when planning or implementing activities or programs. The frequency of meetings will depend on what the workgroup plans to accomplish.

Revitalizing the Workgroup

Regularly add new members to the workgroup and include groups that you want to target. Maintain a connection with management and report successes. Make it fun and rewarding.

Appoint or Recruit Team Leaders

Effective delivery of many wellness initiatives is often dependent on a leader that is close to the participants. Depending on the structure of your organization, you may want to develop smaller teams that have leaders or "captains" to help provide motivation, information, and support to the program participants. Leaders have a major impact on whether the participants have a positive experience. A team leader can be the point of contact or messenger for information shared between the program participants and the Wellness Team and vice versa.

It is important that team leader is creative, enthusiastic, and committed to the program. The team leaders do not have to be the most active and healthy staff members; it is more important that they have the skills to help motivate their team members to success.

What is it Going to Cost?

Staff Time: Building a successful worksite wellness program requires staff time as well as money. Some larger organizations may spend 20 hours per week for three to six months preparing all the steps prior to launching a worksite wellness program.

Business Costs: Monetary costs can fluctuate widely, depending on whether the employer pays all costs, the employees pay all costs, or the costs are shared. The Wellness Council of America estimates the cost per employee to be between \$100 and \$150 per year for an effective wellness program that produces a return on investment of \$300 to \$450. A sample expenditure for various levels of programs would be:

<u>Program Type</u>	<u>Cost per Employee</u>
A minimal (largely paper) program	\$1 - \$7
A moderate program	\$8 - \$15
A medium program with several activities	\$16 - \$35
A fairly comprehensive program	\$36 - \$75
A very comprehensive, effective program	\$76 - \$112

Keep in mind that the return on investment will likely be greater with more comprehensive programs, so the higher cost will also generate a greater return on investment due to lower health care costs and less absenteeism.

A Final Thought on Start-up

After you've laid the groundwork to develop a wellness program, take the time to plan the components that will result in a quality program. Many people want to jump into programming at this point, but following all the steps will ultimately make your program more successful. By assuring that your programming is geared to your employee needs and interests and that you are using proven strategies, you will greatly increase your likelihood for success.

Quick Resource: *Partnership for Prevention: An Essential Health Promotion Sourcebook for Employers, Large and Small*

http://www.prevent.org/images/stories/Files/publications/Healthy_Workforce_2010.pdf

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Why? ⇒	Starting Up	⇒ Assessing	⇒ Strategies	⇒ Making Decisions	⇒ Evaluation